STATEMENT BY MINISTER

DAMAGE due to Cyclone in West Bengal, Orissa and Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATION IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV): Madam, ...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You can lay it on the Table. Members can seek clarifications. They are allowed.

AN HON. MEMBER: The statement has been circulated just now. It would be easy for us to seek clarifications if he reads it.

SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV: All right. Madam, ... cyclonic storm formed in South Andaman Sea on 23rd November, 1988 and moved northwards and transformed into a severe cyclonic storm with a core of hurricane wind with a sustained wind speed of about 200—225 kms. per hour. It crossed India-Bangladesh border on the evening of 29th November, 1988.

On receipt of the information about the likelihood of the severed cyclonic storm the Chief Secretary and Relief Commissioner of Government of West Bengal were contacted on phone and were informed of the details by telex. They were also advised to evacuate population from the coastal low lying areas and to take measures for protection of vital installations. The Chief Secretaries of Orissa, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura were also informed of likely cyclone and were advised to take precautionary measures. The Control Room in the Krishi Bhavan was activated to work round the clock from 29th November, 1988.

Different State Administrations have been reporting progressive extensive damage and the relief measures taken on day-to-day basis. As per the latest reports received from the State Governments and the Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, the cyclone damage has been assessed as follows:—

A. *West Bengal*

I. *DAMAGES*

1. No. of districts affected	5 (North 24 parganas, South 24 parganas, Howrah, Hooghly, and Midnapur). The districts of North 24-parganas and South 24-parganas have been severely affected whereas the impact on other three districts has been less severe.
2. Population affected	25 lakhs
3. Human lives lost	500 (247 in North 24-Parganas and 253 in South 24-Parganas) 800 fishermen are still missing and efforts are being made to trace them.
4. Cattle lost	55,000
5. Crop damages	40% of the cropped areas (confined to North and South 24-Parganas).
6. Number of houses damaged partially and fully	3·17 lakhs.

II. *Relief Measures*:

(i) Periodically cyclone warnings were issued and the local Administration and police authorities were advised to arrange for shifting of the population in the coastal areas to safer places and control rooms were activated at the State, district and block levels in the face of the likelihood of the severe cyclone storm.

(ii) The State Government have so far distributed about Rs. 25 lakh from contingencies, 1264 MT of wheat/rice, 33600 tarpaulins, 6000 dhoties 11,000 sarees, 15,000 children garments, 3000 blankets, 4,000 lungies and 400 bags of milk powder.

B. *ORISSA*:

No human or cattle casualty has been reported. Betel gardens and 30 school buildings and some private houses are reported to have been affected in Balasore district. Assessment of detailed damages is being done.

C. *ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS*:

(i) Losses heavy in Agriculture Sector like paddy, vegetables, pulses, oilseeds and plantation crops.

(ii) Foreshore roads, jetties, seawalls, bridges, culverts, dwelling houses, electricity and water installations are reported to have been damaged.

4. Action to be initiated in the wake of cyclone in the affected areas by the various Ministries/Departments is being monitored by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation on a daily basis. Indian Naval Aircraft and a coast guard vessel are carrying out search operations to locate fishermen adrift at sea as also a missing Light Vessel of Calcutta Port Trust reported missing. Department of Telecommunications have assessed the damage caused to the communication lines and have restored the uprooted telephones in the affected districts. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have assessed the medical stores available in the State and have taken necessary steps in conjunction with the State authorities for deputation of medical teams in the affected areas for undertaking necessary health measures. An amount of Rs. 20.00 lakhs has been sanctioned from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund for augmenting the relief efforts in West Bengal.

On the direction of the Prime Minister of India, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, visited some of the areas severely affected by cyclone in west Bengal on the 6th December, 1988. During my survey of the cyclone hit areas, I witnessed widespread damage caused to crops as well as the houses in the Gosaba, Basanti, Sandeshkhali, Hingalganj, Hashnabad and Sunderban areas of South and North 24 Parganas districts.

I discussed the dimensions of the cyclone damage and the relief measures being taken by the State Administration and their requirement of Central assistance in this regard with the concerned Ministers of West Bengal, and the Members of Parliament and the Legislators of the affected districts and senior officials of the State. I exhorted the State Government authorities to step up measures to reach relief and succour to all sections of the cyclone affected areas of the State and assured all possible assistance from the Central Government to the State Administration in this regard.

The State authorities were informed of the Government of India's decision to make an additional allocation of 5000 MT of rice and 5000 MT of wheat under PDS in the State in the wake of disaster. I also informed the State that the Regional Office of the Indian Petro-Chemicals Corporation Limted (IPCL) has been advised by the Department of Chemicals & Petro-Chemicals, Government of India, to make the desired quantities of parpauline (polythene sheets) available to the State for distribution amongst the cyclone affected people who have been rendered homeless. I also advised the Agriculture Department of the State to explore the possibility of growing alternative crops in the areas which suffered severe crop damage during the cyclone. All necessary help by way of requirements of seeds, fertilizers, etc. to im-

[Shri B. K. Gadhvi]

plement such a contingency plan has also been assured to the State Administration.

The State Government submitted a preliminary report on the damages caused by cyclone in West Bengal and their requirement of funds for relief and restoration during my visit. They have put their requirements of funds at Rs. 52.68 crores on a preliminary assessment basis. They were advised to carry on the relief and restoration works with the available State funds and to submit a detailed memorandum for cyclone relief assistance to the Central Government which they assured to do in the next few days. The State Administration was assured that a Central Team would be deputed immediately on submission of their final memorandum to assess the damage and the requirement of funds for relief purposes and that the ceilings of expenditure required for cyclone relief in the State would be determined expeditiously. Similar action for approval of ceilings of expenditure for cyclone relief would be taken on receipt of memoranda from Orissa and Andaman & Nicobar Islands also.

I also made an appeal to the voluntary & other philanthropic organisations of Calcutta City and I request the hon. Members also to come forward to help the cyclone hit population of the State by way of distribution of blankets, clothings, medicines etc. to the affected people.

I would like to assure the Honourable Members that all possible help will be provided by the Central Government to the people affected by the cyclone as has always been done in the past in the wake of natural calamities.

SHRI MOSTAFA BIN QUASEM (West Bengal): Madam Deputy Chairman, you all are aware by this time that the serious cyclonic storm which lashed the coastal areas of West Bengal, Orissa and the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands left a vast trail of damage. In fact, it has been a national calamity and the details of the extent of loss have been given by the hon. Minister. He visited West Bengal. We know he had discussions with the State Government officials, their Finance Minister and the people's representatives there. And in the statement you will find that he has given all sorts of assurances to the Government of West Bengal that adequate Central help will be given to the Government of West Bengal as relief operations. In the last para, he has pointed out: "I would like to assure the hon. Members that all possible help will be provided by the Central Government to the people affected by the cyclone as it has always been done in the past." Here I would like to remind the hon. Minister that last year, when West Bengal was affected by floods, the Government of West Bengal sought Central assistance to the extent of Rs. 125 crores. The then Agriculture Minister, Shri Bhajan Lal, has assured the Government of West Bengal that all possible help would be given to West Bengal. But actually only Rs. 23.25 crores were sanctioned to the Government of West Bengal. And that was less than the margin money which has stood at Rs. 23.75 crores. So, the first clarification that I would like to seek from the hon. Minister is whether the Government of India will actually abide by the assurances given this time to the Government of West Bengal. Let us hope that the assurances given by Shri Shyam Lal Yadav on behalf of the Government of India will be fully fulfilled by him.

Madam, another thing he gives us to know at para 6 is that Rs. 20 lakhs have been spent by the West Bengal Government. This is not a fact. Yesterday, the Finance Minister of West Bengal gave the reporters to know—and he also divulged it to the hon. Minister—that the Government of West Bengal out of its own funds have already spent Rs. 4.28 crores on relief operations and it will have to spend more during the next few days. Another thing that the hon. Minister would kindly appreciate is that the farmers in the affected areas whose crops have almost been damaged will be in the requirement of agricultural loans. He would also appreciate that most of the farmers have not been able to repay the earlier loans. There is a necessity for giving instructions to

the nationalised banks by the Government of India to give liberal loans to the farmers in the affected areas. And I hope the hon. Minister will kindly make it a point to talk to the appropriate authorities or take up the matter with the appropriate Minister and issue immediate directions to the nationalised banks so that they give liberal farm loans to the agriculturists in the affected areas. And this is all that I want to know from the hon. Minister.

DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI (Andhra Pradesh): Madam, first of all, I congratulate you for bulldozing all these four statements in a record time...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: With the co-operation of the House.

DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: Nowadays, throughout the country, at least one-third of the population is being affected either by floods or by cyclones or by drought or by earthquakes ore something else. So, it is no longer a regional problem. It is a national problem. It is the duty of the Centre to come to the rescue of the affected parts. The State Government gives the estimate. It goes to the Centre. The Centre sends a Central team and the report of the Central team goes to the Central Government and a high-powered ministerial committte at the Centre sits on it. It finally goes to the Finance Ministry and then they will come to a conclusion.

There is a wide gap between the demands from the States and the allocation from the Centre and ulitmately the relief. And on the other hand there is friction between the State Government and the Central Government in this regard. Those people belonging to the same party that are ruling at the Centre in different non-Congress States, raise their hue and cry that these funds are diverted to some other purpose and let the Central Government inquire into it and probe it. (*Interruptions*). Please bear with me. The problem is why not the Central Government take this up on a national scale and take up the relief measures instead of going through this procedural debate to avoid delay and launch rescue operations at a quicker rate?

The second point that I would like to mention is that the hon. Minister mentioned in his Statement that five thousand metric tonnes of wheat and rice each has been released but the affected population in West Bengal is as high as 25 lakhs. It comes to just 4 kgs per head. It is a very meagre amount. It should be enhanced a little bit. My friend mentioned about the problem of agricultural loans and other things. But what I would like to suggest to the Hon. Minister is that you reschedule the existing loans that are given to the farmers and you waive the interest component. It is a natural calamity. So, you don't go into the formalities whether it was there for three years consecutive three years or not, or two and a half years, or two years. You give up all these formalities and see that the entire loans are rescheduled. That is one thing. Then, as the roads are damaged to a large extent, you utilise the services of military engineering or something like that and see that at least the national highways that are going through those districts are repaired and benefited so that the traffic may not be hampered.

With these suggestions, Madam, I seek the clarifications from the Hon. Minister.

SHRI SUNIL BASU RAY (West Bengal): Madam, I have only one question to ask. When the Government is going to give money to the State Government, I want to know the specific date. I am asking this in view of the past experience, because unless the money is given relief cannot be provided. And then as against Rs. 53 crores demanded, only Rs. 25 lakhs you have promised. So, it means nothing. It is only mocking at the suffering of the people. I think the hon. Minister himself has visited the area. No other report is necessary over that personal experience. So, on the basis of the personal experience, on the basis of the meetings here with MPs, MLAs, government officials and every-

[Shri Sunil Basu Ray]

body, I think the Government is quite competent to pay Rs. 53 crores as asked for by the State Government immediately, without any delay.

DR. (SHRIMATI) SAROJINI MAHISHI (Karnataka): Madam, the Minister dealt with most of the relief problems. I would like to ask about the precautionary measures that were taken after the receipt of the information. I would like to know how many hours earlier the information was received. There is a 10 centimetre cyclone warning radar at Calcutta and one at Paradip also in Orissa. Both of them should be able to give the message 24 hours earlier, should be able to sight the cyclone from a distance of 500 kilometres, give the eyes and the velocity and the tangent at which it is going to hit also. Therefore, under these circumstances many a time information comes and lies in the Deputy Commissioner's office or somewhere. It is not given to the people as a precautionary measure to clear the areas and of course it is a natural calamity. Under the circumstances how many hours earlier you get the information, what precautionary measures were taken to distribute that information to the people concerned and to ask them to evacuate the area. These are very very important things. Otherwise, what is the use of having the radars of 10 centimetres? Was it the fault of the meteorological department or default on the part of the Deputy Commissioner's office or the All India Radio broadcast? Where exactly the default was there? Of course, the relief measures are all being talked about. I am not going into the details of the relief measures. Relief measures come at the second stage. The first step is to take precautionary measures. Did the reconnaissance aircraft go into the cyclone at that time? Even if you have not got the information, Madam, let him collect the information at a later stage, but these things should be made clear.

SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV: Madam, I would like to clarify some of the points that have been raised by the hon. Members. The first is regarding the assurances. The hon. Members, on the other side, they doubt our assurances and always say that the money that was sanctioned was less. Perhaps, they are not aware, or they may be aware, that the demands placed by the State Government in such matters are always on the high side. And there are certain norms which we have to follow and make assessment on that basis, that is how the ceiling for expenditure is approved. And you know on the margin money, the ratio is 50:50. Fifty per cent in the margin money from the States and fifty per cent from the Centre and above that the share of the Central Government is 25 per cent and State Governments is 25 per cent. In the case of West Bengal, if I give the figures for so many years, the assistance sought has always been very high but the ratio has almost been the same every year, the money that was approved for expenditure. In the year 1986-87, it was Rs. 255 crores and the money sanctioned, approved expenditure, was Rs. 35.38 crores. In the same way, in the year 1987-88, money sought was Rs. 264.31 crores and expenditure approved was Rs. 82.90 crores. So, from that it will appear that this year also, in the year 1988-89, the money sought was Rs. 125.54 crores and the total expenditure approved was Rs. 53.56 crores. So far as relief and rehabilitation is concerned, Madam, the money sought was Rs. 33.75 crores and the expenditure approved ceiling was Rs. 8.22 crores. So that is how all this sectoral money is given and the details are also given. I think the State Government knows it very well. The parties also know because they are in power there, how the money is processed, what amount is allowed, what is not allowed. Even then, Madam, as the Finance Commission has found it out to their surprise that the system is such that the States projections of damage and the amounts required for relief tend to be exaggerated greatly. This fact was also commented upon by the ex-Finance Commissioner. It is not that the Central Government has prescribed for relief a different formula for different States. But the State Governments follow different norms. So far as the States follow their own norms to provide money from their

budgets, that is not the problem. But so far as the Central expenditure approval is concerned, throughout the country there is no discrimination from State to State, maybe ruled by one party or the other party. The norms are the same. There is no discrimination and full money has been given to the West Bengal Government in all cases and assurances have been fulfilled. There is no going back on that. And in this cyclonic calamity also we went there, we went round the places, saw all that and immediately the State Government asked for 5,000 metric tonnes of rice and 5,000 metric tonnes of wheat. The Government of India has released the total amount, the total quantity of grain, and so how can they say that more is required? When I left Delhi, I had received only this much information and it was already sent and the Prime Minister after my return has sent Rs. 20 lakhs for relief. How can he say that we have not done in the circumstances, as it should be? (*Interruptions*).

SHRI MOSTAFA BIN QUASEM: I did not say that.

SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV: Please hear me. Madam, the State Government has so far distributed about Rs. 25 lakhs from contingencies. This is the information that I got from the State Government. It is not his information that I can rely upon. The State Government took the assessment and that they project in their submissions is Rs. 52 crores odd. But they have to submit a memorandum. I can say this much that the moment they send the memorandum and it is received by us, the next day we will send a team. Without the memorandum, how can I grant money? There is a set procedure which we have to follow; The sectoral things are there.

SHRI M A. BABY (Kerala): A provisional allocation can be made. (*Interruptions*) Only Rs. 20 lakhs ...

SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV: My dear friend, I have already mentioned it. Provisional allocation has been made. Foodgrains were also given immediately They have demanded 5,000 tonnes more. I have already said that we shall again process it. Whatever requirement is there, we will try to meet it. You need not worry on that account.

The only thing I would like to impress upon hon. Members, in this connection, is that the relief should be distributed equally among all concerned. I say this because it has been brought to my notice by different parties and even by some members belonging to the partners in the Left Front that there is no proper distribution and that there is some kind of discrimination between members, parties and people. (*Interruptions*). It should not be so. They should look into it. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI MOTURU HANUMANTHA RAO (Andhra Pradesh): In the case of Punjab, Rs. 100 crores were given (*Interruptions*) You went to West Bengal at the instance of the Prime Minister. The people of West Bengal expected more relief immediately.

SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV: Immediately, foodgrains were given. Tarpaulins were provided. We have asked them to send the memorandum. What more can be done?

In regard to loans and interest, I discussed this with the Finance Minister of West Bengal. I told him that he should first discuss this with the representatives of co-operative banks and other financial institutions in the State and that we shall also see what could be done. I have asked him to hold preliminary discussions with the banks etc. and he assured me that he will do so.

A question has been raised as to when the money will be given. I think I have explained the position.

In regard to giving advance information...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Prevention.

SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV: It was received in the morning and it was trans-

[Shri Shyam Lal Yadav]

mitted to the West Bengal Government immediately. Cyclone was in the evening.

DR. (SHRIMATI) SAROJINI MAHISHI: I think, the hon. Minister does not have the information. I had asked, how many hours earlier it was received and when it was broadcast.

SHRI SHYAM LAL YADAV: It was received in the morning. It was immediately transmitted and broadcast over the radio also. The West Bengal Government also alerted all the District Magistrates, police stations, block and taluk headquarters. All the concerned persons whom they could contact were alerted. The fishermen were also warned. But sometimes, you know, they do not believe such warnings.

In the end, Madam, I would only say that we will extend all possible help and Members need not worry on that account.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Before adjourning, I thank hon. Members for their co-operation in conducting the proceedings of the House and I wish them a good holiday. I also thank the staff.

The House is now adjourned and we will meet again at 11 A.M. on Friday, the 16th December, 1988.

The House then adjourned at thirty-nine minutes past nine of the clock, till eleven of the clock on Friday, the 16th December, 1988.